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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the effects of training and service in a student advocacy program for Emotionally Disturbed (ED) children on attitudes of 16 secondary teachers toward ED children in the regular class. The intervention program involved 6 days of inservice training on working with ED students, delivered concurrent with the teachers' serving in an ED child advocacy role under the guidance of a supervising crisis teacher. Skills included ways to give negative feedback without hostility, life space interviewing, surface behavior management, and basic behavior modification concepts. Evaluation of teacher attitude revealed no significant change from pre to post test for either the experimental (N=16) or control (N=13) Ss. The implication of the study is that affecting teachers' attitudes once they are on the job is a very difficult task; there must be increased emphasis, awareness and skills delivered on a preservice basis. (Author/CL)

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Regular Classroom Teachers' Attitudes Toward Mainstreaming the Emotionally Disturbed: Can They Be Changed?

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Abstract

This study reviews the effect that training and service in a student advocacy program for Emotionally Disturbed (ED) children had on teacher attitude toward ED children in the regular class. The intervention program involved six days of inservice training on working with ED students, delivered concurrent with the teachers serving in ED child advocacy role under the guidance of a supervising crisis teacher. Evaluation of teacher attitude revealed no significant change from pre to post test for either the experimental or control groups. The implication of the study is that affecting teacher attitude once they are on the job is a very difficult task thus there must be increased emphasis, awareness and skills delivered on a preservice basis.

Regular Classroom Teachers' Attitudes Toward Mainstreaming the Emotionally Disturbed: Can They Be Changed?

With the demands of Public Law 94-142 an increasing number of children formerly excluded from school or at least excluded from regular classes due to their behavior problems are now being placed in regular classrooms. Areas of concern to educators include not only the skills teachers hopefully possess in dealing with these students but also the attitudes teachers possess toward working with these Emotionally Disturbed (ED) children. Haring and Phillips (1962) stated that the attitudes teachers hold regarding handicapped children are extremely influential in determining the intellectual, social, and emotional adjustments of the children. Research by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), and Brophy and Good (1974) indicated that teacher expectation, based on the attitudes they held toward student prospects for success in school, had a significant effect on student classroom performance. It is thus reasonable for educators to be concerned about teacher attitudes toward ED children in the regular classroom.

Modification of Teacher Attitude Toward Exceptional Children

Research in the modification of teachers' attitudes toward exceptional children has generally indicated negative attitudes of regular classroom teachers can be improved utilizing a workshop

approach giving the teachers new information about the children and how to deal with their behaviors (Haring, Stern, and Cruickshank, 1958; Schofer, 1961; Warren, Turner and Brodys, 1964). Research has also shown, however, that contact with exceptional children, following delivery of new information can cause a negative shift in attitudes (Hall, 1970; Schottel, Iano, and McGettigan, 1971). Haring, Stern, and Cruikshank (1958) found that information alone, even without contact, was enough to lower attitudes toward Emotionally Disturbed children.

Harasymiw and Horne (1975) used workshops along with trained special teachers working with regular teachers to change teacher attitudes and facilitate mainstreaming of mildly handicapped children. The experimental teachers in this study had significantly more favorable attitudes than did the controls.

The research project described herein investigated teacher's attitudes toward mainstreaming emotionally distrubed children following the teachers' participation in six days of workshop and their participation in a year long student advocacy program under the guidance of a trained ED professional. The attempt was to effect teachers attitude toward the feasibility of working with students in their regular classrooms through application of new information, skill training, and hands on experience with disturbed students in a setting where immediate crisis intervention was available.

Method

Subjects

Two groups of teachers participated in this study. The experimental group consisted of all secondary staff teachers of the small, rural Middleville R-I School District while the control group teachers consisted of all secondary staff members of the equally small and rural neighboring Martinton R-II School District. Only subjects who completed both the pretest and the posttest were included in the measurement, leaving 13 subjects in the control group and 16 in the experimental group.

Instrumentation

The Learning Handicapped Integration Inventory (LHII) (Watson and Hewett, 1976) was utilized in a pre and posttest measurement format. The LHII is an inventory assessing regular classroom teachers perceptions of the effect of integrating various categories of mildly handicapped children into the regular class. The LHII consists of a vignette describing a particular child, followed by questions pertaining to the child's effect on the teacher and the classroom and the classroom's effect on the child. This research utilized two forms of the LHII, one involving a shy withdrawn ED student.

Procedure

Workshops. The workshop experience consisted of six, four to six hour days. Participants were reimbursed $5.00 per hour for

workshop days. Three of the workshop days, occurring prior to the opening of school, were designed to effect the cognitive component of the teachers' attitude toward mainstreaming, to provide alternative behavior management techniques and to begin a delineation of the teachers advocacy role. The subsequent workshop days were scheduled on Saturdays during the school year. These days were intended to provide methods to deal with specific problems which had arisen in the mainstreaming program and to reinforce earlier learned skills and procedures.

Along with information on ED students in general and the mainstreaming program mechanics, the teachers received training in dealing with problem students in one on one situation. This aspect of the workshop was conducted by two outside consultants from neighboring universities. The skills imparted to the teachers included ways to give negative feedback in ways that avoid hostility, life space interviewing, surface behavior management, and behavior modification concepts of reward and reinforcement.

Student Advocacy Program: Each of the secondary staff members employed by Middleville R-I became a student advocate/ombudsman for one to three target students. A total of 45 behavior problem students were assigned in the program. The students to whom each teacher was assigned depended on existing empathy between student and teacher, class schedules, and the lack of any existing hostility

between advocate and student.

The specific actions of the individual teachers depended upon the needs of the student with whom they were working. The primary requirement was that the teachers seek to build a positive relationship with the students whom they were serving. The teacher was to lend encouragement to the student, to become concerned with his behavioral and academic performance, and seek to build positive self-concepts through techniques of regular, positive contacts at school, and have most importantly the teacher attempted to create an emotional climate of warmth and caring between himself/herself and the student.

Throughout the year the teachers were supported in their endeavors by an experienced crisis teacher, specifically trained in working with ED students. The crisis teacher administered the entire program and lent support and advise to the teachers in their advocacy role along with pursuing the duties normally associated with the crisis teacher role

Results

The mean scores for two forms of the LHII, pretest and post-test, are presented in Table I.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1

Mean Scores on LHII Scales

Group X Test	N	Acting Out Scale	Withdrawn Scale
Control Pretest	13	97.46	108.15
Control Posttest	13	95.23	108.31
Experimental Pretest	16	102.56	118.50
Experimental Posttest	16	96.56	108.56

A multiple analysis of variance examination utilizing the Hotelling-Lowly trace found no significant difference in overall group X test effect, F (2, 26) = 1.81, Prob. F = .1829. This means that there were no significant changes for either the treatment or control group from pretest to posttest.

Discussion

The results of this study as well as a review of the previously cited research makes it clear that changes in teacher attitudes regarding ED students are very difficult to achieve. Exposure to behaviorally disordered students negates gains which may be made through re-education. Even though no significant findings were achieved, one aspect of the data bears closer examination and analysis. The experimental teachers' pretest scores indicated appreciably higher expectations than those of the control group. This may be considered to be due to anticipation by the experiments of the upcoming program in which they were to be involved. Following exposure to the harsh realities of working with ED students, their attitudes declined to a level nearly identical to the controls.

The teacher advocates, in large, filled their role skillfully. There were some notable successes in advocate relationships with target students. Certain students completely changed their attitudes and behavior toward school. There were also a smaller number of notable failures, resulting in shouting matches, hostility,

and disenchantment on the part of teacher and students.

The workshop experience was designed to give teachers effective skills for dealing with problem students. It also aimed at increasing confident and raising of teacher expectations for success. This was accomplished for some participants and less successful for others. Following this, the teachers had to deal with the reality of working with problem students, students who were not adapting to the school environment and who likely had a history of difficulties with teachers.

Overall, seven teachers attitudes improved and nine declined. In those instances where the students with whom the teachers were dealing improved in their actions, it is clear how these teachers' attitudes might also improve. In cases where the students' behavior worsened or remained constant, it is equally clear that teacher expectations might decline.

The negative results of this research are important in consideration of the implementation of PL 94-142. The law's ultimate success depends on the cooperation and effectiveness of regular classroom teachers. At present their knowledge about mainstreaming generally depends upon the efficacy of workshops and/or one "mainstreaming" or overview courses taken in college. The workshop approach, based on present research evidence, appears not to be the effecacious method as was perhaps assumed. What would seem to be more effective is increased emphasis on preservice education.

Working with all students, in whatever way best serves the student, must be made part of every teacher's concept of their regular duties. Institutions of higher learning must be cognizant of this idea and shape their personnel preparation programs accordingly. Special and regular education university faculties must work as closely together as faculties in the public schools. If this is accomplished, then perhaps schools will be able to deliver on the high ideas which have been set forth by law.

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